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U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Is the Question. Military Forces of Most African Nations under US Control

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"They use ludicrous terms like 'gold star family' and make the case for continued American aggression around the world."

The desire to be affirmed by American society has dangerous consequences for black people. This pernicious dynamic creates the inclination to worship any black face in a high place or to defend questionable activity. The death of special forces ***Sergeant La David Johnson*** *in Niger is a case in point.* ***Donald Trump****'s racism and stupidity prevented him from performing the simple task of conveying appropriate condolences to Johnson's widow. The ensuing brouhaha focuses on what Trump said in the phone call overheard by Congressional Black Caucus member* ***Frederica Wilson****.*

Almost no one is asking about the fact that American troops are stationed in Africa at all. Few people realize that such a thing as the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) exists and that the military forces of most African nations have been under the de facto control of this country since the George W. Bush administration.

There is similar silence about the role that the United States played in bringing groups designated as terrorists into nations such as Niger and Mali. The decision to overthrow **Muammar Gaddafi** in Libya is directly responsible for Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliate groups gaining a foothold throughout the region. Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and their NATO partners in crime were not just responsible for the deaths of thousands of Libyans, slavery in that country, and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. They are responsible for bringing state sponsored terror to the entire region.

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Focusing on Donald Trump's bad behavior is a sure path to confusion and accommodation. Instead of denouncing imperialism, otherwise sensible people are waving the flag and attacking Trump using right wing terminology. They use ludicrous terms like "gold star family" and make the case for continued American aggression around the world.

It is pointless to ask about the specific circumstances of Johnson's death. He died along with three other soldiers in the murky circumstances that are to be expected in warfare. Any questions posed should be about America's ever expanding empire and the determination to make war on as many places in the world as possible.

Black people should feel no need to validate themselves through military service or any other undertaking. As the people who have suffered through centuries of unpaid labor, **Jim Crow** apartheid and constant oppression, we should feel no need to uphold this system. Yet we have already proven a willingness to die for the interests of a corrupt and dangerous state. There is frankly no reason to show pride in Johnson's death or to allow a member of the CBC to turn an important issue into nonsensical grandstanding versus Trump.

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At this juncture in history all talk of patriotism is at best foolish and at worst a call for continued crimes and mass murder. It is also high time to end the deification of the American war dead, even when they look like us. They die because they are trying to kill other people.

Condolences to Johnson's family are appropriate but they are also appropriate for the millions of people who lost loved ones to American empire building in Niger, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. That is a short list which only includes the victims of American war crimes committed in the past 20 years.

No one should be fooled by crocodile tears from white Americans with grudges against Trump. If Sergeant Johnson had been killed by a police officer in an American city many of the same white people who now rush to call him a hero would either shrug their shoulders in indifference or applaud his death. They should not be allowed to jump on the bandwagon of fake concern because Trump is their target.

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As for congresswoman Wilson, she has a golden opportunity to discuss the impact of American interventions abroad and question their rationale. But like the rest of her CBC colleagues, her interests are confined to reliance on the largesse of the Democratic Party and their corporate benefactors. Trump's bad behavior makes him an easy target for scorn and a convenient punching bag for the useless black political class. If Wilson wants to take on the president it ought to be for more substantive reasons. Likening his boorishness to "Benghazi" uses a right wing trope for ridiculous effect.

Any discussion about Sergeant Johnson ought to point out that he was a victim of the poverty draft. Before enlisting he worked at Walmart, a sure path to continued poverty or to the dubious odds offered by the army. Trump said that Johnson "knew what he signed up for" but that is probably not true. He took a chance and hoped for the best. Unfortunately the machinations of Bush, Obama, Clinton and Trump made his choice a bad one. If the Congresswoman wants to have a debate she could start with the realities of Johnson's life and how it ran afoul of United States foreign policy. Only then would her fight with a president be worthwhile.

Margaret Kimberley*'s Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at http://freedomrider.blogspot.com. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com.*

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